

Town of Newfields
First Session of the 2022 Annual Meeting
Deliberative Session Minutes-February 8, 2022

Select Board: Michael C. Sununu, Jacquelyn Silvani and Betsy Coes

Moderator: John Hayden

Town Clerk: Sue McKinnon

Supervisor of the Checklist: Lynne Sweet

Moderator John Hayden called the meeting to order at 7pm. He introduced the head table and reviewed the rules and procedures for the meeting.

Article 1. Shall the Town of Newfields raise and appropriate as an operating budget, not including appropriations by special warrant articles and other appropriations voted separately, the amounts set forth on the budget posted with the warrant or as amended by vote of the first session, for the purposes set forth therein, totaling \$1,833,099? Should this article be defeated, the default budget shall be \$1,753,008, which is the same as last year, with certain adjustments required by previous action of the Town of Newfields or by law; or the governing body may hold one special meeting, in accordance with RSA 40:13, X and XVI, to take up the issue of a revised operating budget only. Select Board recommends the \$1,833,099 as set forth on said budget. (Majority vote required)

The budget was reviewed. Michael Price questioned the increased cost for recycling. Jacqui explained that last year's amount was for one-half year only. Recycling wasn't reinstated until June.

Mike Todd commented that recycling hasn't lived up to the Town's expectations, with not being able to recycle glass, types of plastics and cardboard accepted, etc.

Phyllis Mackey commented that the warrant article last year shows the support recycling has in town. Residents wish recycling would return to curbside pickup of all recyclables.

Tricia Cox added that the Town already voted in favor of recycling and there are always refinements that can take place in the future.

Michael Sununu said that the cardboard bin in the town hall parking lot is being emptied more often to accommodate the amount of cardboard that is dropped off for recycling.

Jacqui Silvani stated that she spoke with the owner of ELM Recycling, and he indicated that the amount of money we are saving is more than anticipated. It may be a small inconvenience to have to bring cardboard to the town hall but the money we get from recycling cardboard offsets the cost of recycling plastics and paper. The cardboard brings in money.

Nancy Taylor commented that glass can be brought to the Newmarket Transfer Station to be recycled.

Jeff Buxton requested figures in writing to see how much we are saving.

Steve Coes asked about the increase in the Fire Department and Police Department budgets totaling \$150,000.

Michael Sununu indicated that the biggest increase in the Police Department budget is labor related due to inflation. The Fire Department increase is to provide stipends and on call wages to encourage volunteers to respond to calls.

Jeff Buxton said that we will be implementing a new program. He reached out to multiple departments in the area who have done the same thing. There will be on call shifts from 6am until 6pm, and 6pm until 6am. Day shifts will be Monday through Friday and night shifts will be Monday through Thursday. There is more availability on the weekends, and on call shifts are not necessary. The stipends will be minimum wage which is about \$90.00 per shift. Providing stipends, will encourage younger members of the department to respond and it may give incentive to residents to join the Fire Department. The same firemen tend to go to the calls and their average age is 58 years old. After 41 years, the Fire Department needs to take a new approach. Hiring a full-time department is out of the question because there aren't many calls. Having other departments cover is a huge expense. Homeowners insurance will go up when there are longer response times. This will be a trial for the year to see how it works. There is an extra \$20,000 in the Fire Department budget and Federal ARPA funds are available to supplement the costs.

The Fire Department welcomes both men and women to join.

Part of the rationale in using the ARPA funds is to avoid a massive spike in the budget. The Board is trying to be fiscally responsible without having a dramatic increase in the tax rate. Jeff Buxton added that there may be other avenues of funding through grants.

Bobby Kelly asked about where the money in the budget goes if it is not used. Michael Sununu explained that the money in the Fire Department budget will be used first. The ARPA funds are outside of the budget and may be used at any time without affecting the tax rate. If the program is not working the ARPA funds will remain untouched. If the budget money is not used it will go back into the general fund into the unreserved fund balance. The unreserved fund balance is utilized each year to offset tax rate increases.

Steve Coes asked about the Police Department increases totaling 11% of last year's budget.

Police Chief Wayne Young said that the increases include 5% salary raises, but it does not include his salary under contract. The part-time line item covers shifts when full timers are off duty due to holidays and vacations. Wayne used a formula to calculate the increases. There is no overtime budget; he relies on part-time officers to cover those shifts. A couple of officers will be moving on creating major staffing issues. The higher wages may help in recruiting and retaining employees.

Michael Sununu added that the prior year expenditures do not include the Police Chief salary because former Chief Nate Liebenow left in March 2021. There is little offset due to that specific situation.

Betsy Coes brought up the Pest Control line item. She worked for Dragon Mosquito years ago doing surveillance and identifying mosquitos. There are only two types of mosquitos in the salt marsh and they do not carry EEE or West Nile Virus. She would like to recommend not spraying the salt marsh but continue to treat the freshwater sites. Spraying of the marsh during high tide, does not make much of a difference in the mosquito population. Not spraying the marshes will not compromise anyone's health. In her opinion, we will be fine by reducing pest control by \$15,000.

A motion was made by Betsy Coes and seconded by Mike Price to amend Article 1 to 1,818,099 with the recommendation that line 4414 Pest Control be decreased by \$15,000. The motion to amend was voted on and passed. Article 1 as amended will be placed on the ballot for a vote.

Article 2. Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$50,000 to be added to the Fire Truck Capital Reserve Fund previously established, for the future purchase of a new fire truck? Recommended by Select Board. (Majority vote required)

Jeff Buxton explained that we have been setting money aside in this capital reserve each year for several years. It takes about a year to spec out a truck and then another year to get it. The purchase price would be approximately 575k -650k for a standard pumper truck. Our newest truck is 11 years old, and the oldest truck is 38 years old. The older truck does have value and it will be beneficial to trade it in to help ease the cost of the new fire truck. The department is required to keep trucks up to a certain standard to keep insurance costs low in Town. With the membership in the department decreasing, it may not be necessary to have three trucks.

Jacqui Silvani asked the life span of a truck. Jeff replied that ideally it is 30 years. The balance of the capital reserve fund, after this year will be approximately \$470,000.

Article 2 as written will be placed on the ballot for a vote.

Article 3. Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$2,000 to be added to the Fire Department Equipment Capital Reserve Fund. Recommended by Select Board. (Majority vote required)

This warrant article is like Article 2, where money is set aside each year for the future purchase of equipment. The funds were last used to purchase the "jaws of life". There is approximately \$4,000 in the fund.

Article 3 as written will be placed on the ballot for a vote.

Article 4. Shall the Town vote to authorize the Select Board to sell the municipally owned property located at 75 Main Street, (Tax Map 102-78) comprised of 0.435 acres of land and the building commonly referred to as the Main Street Art building to the Newfields Water & Sewer District? This land and building will be sold for \$1 with a condition of sale that the Town Offices

and Fire Department will receive sewer and water services at no charge for 10 years from the date of closing. Other terms and conditions of the sale will be at the discretion of the Select Board. (Majority vote required)

Michael Sununu indicated that we had a warrant article last year to sell the property and it did not pass. This is a second effort to provide the opportunity to the Water & Sewer Department to purchase the building. The Board has been discussing this acquisition with them for over a year. The Water & Sewer Department are currently leasing the building. Members of the community enjoy having the drop off location for payments. This is a good way to allow them to acquire the building, and the Town being compensated over the next 10 years.

Mike Price asked the anticipated pay back. Michael Sununu commented that we pay \$14,000 per year for services at the Town Hall and Fire Department. This calculates to \$140,000. It is a little higher than what we paid for it. This purchase will be a savings for the Fire Department and Town Hall. This year's budget does include the \$14,000 for the year, in case the warrant article does not pass.

Phil Hunt asked what the building will be used for. Michael Sununu explained that it will be offices and a storage area for Water & Sewer documents that are currently stored at the Water Treatment Facility. They do not anticipate any change in use. The warrant article allows the Board to have flexibility to negotiate a mutually agreeable transaction.

Water Commissioner Ray Buxton indicated that there are 3 bays in the building out back and spare equipment has been moved there.

Michael added that this warrant article is a solution that will provide benefit to the Water & Sewer Department. If this gets voted down, we may have to come back next year with another article.

Mike Todd commented that this is a "win-win" for all and makes sense in his opinion.

Article 4 as written will be placed on the ballot for a vote.

Article 5. Shall the Town vote to raise and appropriate the sum \$5,000 for the 175th Town Celebration festivities. (Majority vote required)

Michael Sununu stated that the Town will be celebrating its 175th anniversary in two years. The Celebration Committee intends to present another warrant article next year for the same amount to provide for a large celebration.

Article 5 as written will be placed on the ballot for a vote.

Article 6. By petition of 25 or more eligible voters of the Town of Newfields, to see if the town will go on record opposing the retail sale of dogs and cats in pet stores in the town. This resolution is necessary because the majority of dogs and cats sold in pet stores are sourced from large-scale, inhumane commercial breeding facilities commonly called "puppy mills". The record of this vote shall be transmitted by written notice from the selectmen to the town's state legislators and to the Governor of New Hampshire.

Petitioner Alison Johnson spoke. Although, we do not currently have any pet stores in town this would be a statement by the residents as to our opposition to commercial breeders who sell cats and dogs in pet stores from “puppy mills” which is inhumane to these animals.

Mike Todd stated that this article will not change the zoning ordinances. This will be a resolution that will be sent to the State putting our town on record as opposing the retail sale of dogs and cats in pet stores in town.

Article 6 as written will be placed on the ballot for a vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Sue McKinnon

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